

Principles for Expanded Child Development Programs in South Carolina Public Schools

Goal:

To achieve high quality Child Development programs for all “at-risk” children that prepares them for kindergarten, success in subsequent grades and success in life with availability for all at-risk-four-year-olds.

Child Development for at-risk four-year-olds will:

- Meet established standards for quality;
- Take place in a variety of settings, including public and private child care centers and Head Start programs and schools, under the accountability of the public school system;
- Be offered in culturally, ethnically and linguistically appropriate settings and developed in concert with an infrastructure for educating a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce;
- Be inclusive of children with special needs;
- Linked to full-day early care and education programs to meet the needs of working families; and
- Be publicly funded
- Attract and keep professionals who are educated and compensated at levels comparable to teachers in South Carolina’s K-12 system;
- Be administered at the State level by the SC Department of Education to maximize resources and articulate with other relevant systems

Principles of South Carolina’s Expanded Child Develop program for At-Risk Four-Year- Old Children:

1. Quality Standards Will Support Children’s Early Development

South Carolina at-risk families will be able to enroll their 4-year-olds in a publicly funded, high quality preschool program that meets research-based standards for children’s social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and physical development. “High Quality” is defined as meeting all current South Carolina Child Development Regulations and Guidelines. These standards will be linked to K-12 educational standards. An early childhood environmental assessment will validated the quality of an early childhood setting. SC state regulations provide for developmentally appropriate and instructionally sound programs.

2. Early Childhood Educators will be well Educated, Fairly Compensated and Culturally, Ethnically Reflective of the Children Served

As a part of fostering a seamless transition from preschool to kindergarten, a goal will be set for child development teachers to be educated and compensated at levels comparable to teachers in South Carolina's K-12 system. Early education professionals will have access to and engage in ongoing professional development. They will reflect the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of South Carolina's children.

3. Programs Will Match Families' Needs

Families will have access to quality programs with settings, locations, hours and participatory opportunities that meet their needs and preferences and support their aspirations for their children. Programs will be linked to community resources supporting the healthy development of children and families. Full day programming for 6.5 hours per day, five days per week will be provided. Wrap-around fees would be aligned with childcare vouchers for families who meet eligibility.

4. Programs Will be Inclusive of Children with Special Needs and/or Disabilities

Programs will be designed to promote inclusion of children with special needs and/or disabilities. Elements that promote their inclusion will be integrated into the planning and design of programs, facilities and staff training programs. In every community, connections will be forged among service providers to ensure early identification and the availability of appropriate services to children with special needs and/or disabilities; training and resources will be available for parents and providers.

5. Programs Will be Regularly Evaluated to Assure Desired Outcomes for Children

Programs will be accountable through regular quality assessments using program assessment and child assessments that are valid, age-appropriate tools. These assessments will be developmentally, culturally, ethnically and linguistically appropriate.

6. Administration Will be Streamlined and Articulate Well with Other Relevant Systems

Expanded Child Development program for at-risk children will be administered at the state level by the South Carolina Department of Education to assure articulation with South Carolina's K-12 education system. Services should be connected to programs serving infants and toddlers and those providing full-year services for children of all ages when available. Wherever possible, infrastructure, such as training programs, will be built to serve the entire system and existing infrastructure with other relevant systems will be maximized.